

EDITOR'S VIEW

Thanks for sharing the journey

ABOUT three-and-a-half years ago a new chapter opened in my life when I was appointed editor of **POST**. It was a big adjustment – moving from broadcasting to print as well as relocating from Gauteng to KwaZulu-Natal. But what a fantastic journey it has been. In the past nine quarters (from the beginning of 2012) **POST** has grown its circulation for eight quarters. It has done so at a time when newspaper circulation has been falling around the country and around the world.

We also expanded our footprint in Gauteng and launched an online version of the title allowing readers to get an electronic version of **POST** anywhere in the world. Our Facebook page (*POST Newspaper*) continues to grow in popularity and has now become an important news gathering tool as well as a platform for our newsroom to interact with readers. What has always made **POST** unique is the relationship it shares with its readers. It is

staffed by a group of people who work tirelessly to ensure the title remains the voice and heart of the community. To this effect we joined readers in exposing drug dealers. We also helped people find jobs. And more recently we started our now popular column – *Express Yourself* – giving readers an opportunity to do exactly that. This week my chapter at **POST** comes to an end. By the time you read this I would have taken over as editor of our sister publication the *Sunday Tribune*. My successor on **POST** will be announced in the coming weeks. For me, it has been a great honour to serve as a guardian for **POST** – the title where I started my journalism career. I pay homage to all those who came before me. It is through their efforts that **POST** has survived almost 60 years. And I wish those who will follow me every success. My thanks to the news team who have always been supportive and hard working as well as our

many columnists. I must also thank the advertising, marketing, and circulation teams. Finally, thank you to you our readers. To the countless people whom I've met and interacted with – thank you. Your feedback whether positive or negative was always most welcome.

Best wishes,
AAKASH BRAMDEO
Editor

VIEW FROM THE TOP

'We have more in common than that which divides us'

THERE'S a final question that I have snuck into the qualifying examination for trainees in my Y Academy Radio Learnership programme over the past couple of years. "A hostage taker has a gun to your head. In 60 seconds, he will end your life. You have one minute to live. What do you have to say to the world in the 60 seconds that are left to you?" It's a test of character, really. It's an attempt to drill down to the essence of what one holds dear about one's life. Ian Fleming, creator of James Bond, voiced this admirably when he had his hero say: "You only live twice: Once when you are born. And once when you look death in the face." By challenging my trainees to confront their own mortality in their minds, I am able to get a clear insight into which of them truly appreciates this ephemeral thing called life. After all, it is only by appreciating the value of something that one can cherish and nurture it to its full potential. And the thought occurred to me as I navigated through Johannesburg traffic to the office this morning: what if this were to be my last column ever in this publication? It was 4 May 2011 when the first

installment of "View from the Top" appeared – three weeks shy of three years ago. During that time, it has appeared in the same space every week without fail; except for Christmas Day last year when **POST** did not publish. There are some 345 000 readers who browse through **POST** every week. Of these, about 24 000 people will read these 800 words every week. What would I say to you, dear reader, if I had this one final opportunity to leave you with a message? It is simply this: We have more in common than that which divides us. It's a theme I have revisited over and over again in my current day job: how do we steer the national conversation along a path that draws us together? The recent events in the Crimea, which kick-started the new Cold War, also triggered my recollection of a haunting theme from the *Lieutenant Kijé Suite* by Russian composer Sergei Prokofiev. I've had the snippet playing at the back of my mind fairly consistently over the past weeks; mainly because it was used by the musician known as Sting in his 1985 song called *Russians*. Sting's song was a commentary on the Cold War's underlying premise of



KANTHAN PILLAY

mutually assured destruction (MAD) – which is what one may expect if the US and Russia were to unleash nuclear weapons upon each other. He sang: "We share the same biology / Regardless of ideology / What might save us, me, and you / Is if the Russians love their children too." In many ways, as we approach the 20th anniversary of our freedom as a nation, we are steering a path of mutually assured destruction. We have children who will vote in this election for the first time who were born into a world of equality without being classified into race groups by apartheid's population registration act. Yet today, we have a government elected by the people of this free country who are choosing once again to divide us by race. They have no legal basis to do so. There is nothing today that prevents any person from declaring themselves to be African even if apartheid would have classified them as white, coloured, or Indian. What can they do if I tick the box that declares me to be African on the Employment Equity sheet? Can they force me to take a blood test? Or a pencil test? Or any of those other outrages which were perpetrated against our masses for decades? "The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself," declares the Old Testament. Race has to vanish from the national conversation. The generation born 20 years ago should not be held accountable for the atrocities of their ancestors. And so, in the event of my never

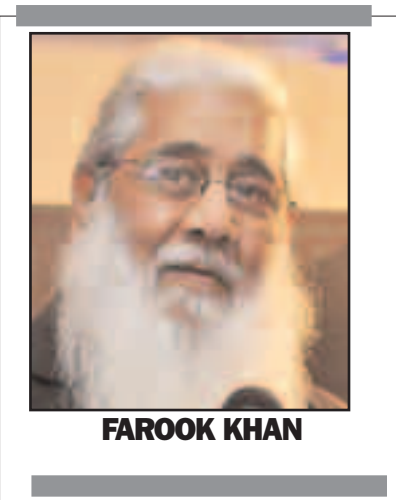
speaking to you in these pages again, I urge you to take up the cause of fighting against unjust laws that use race rather than poverty as a means test for empowerment. We have more in common than that which divides us. I am not the first to say this. I leave you with the words of our nation's greatest son as he stood before us at the Union Buildings almost exactly twenty years ago: "Our daily deeds as ordinary South Africans must produce an actual South African reality that will reinforce humanity's belief in justice, strengthen its confidence in the nobility of the human soul and sustain all our hopes for a glorious life for all. "Let each know that for each, the body, the mind, and the soul, have been freed to fulfil themselves. "Let freedom reign. "God bless Africa." ■ *Kanthan Pillay is MD of the Yired group of companies and CEO of 99.2 Yfm. He writes in his personal capacity email: Kanthan.Pillay@gmail.com Twitter: @kanthanpillay*

TALKING POINT

Tribulations of Uncle Jack's generation

JACK Moodley is one of the last remaining stalwarts of the Casbah and during this past week, he attended the funeral of lifelong friend, Poobie Naicker – aged 89 – a legend in the teaching profession. It was a time of deep reflection for Uncle Jack who turns 94 soon. Looking back, he owned a string of first class restaurants in the inner Durban City like the Delhi, Princess, Paradise, Khyber, and the Maharaja which he was forced to close due to the Group Areas Act. It was an Indian restaurant in a white area, the fact that members of the privileged race flocked there daily to savour his culinary delights

did not matter to the authorities. He bought the very famous, Vic's Café in Clairwood, which was the home of masala, salt, and vinegar chips, which attracted those with this discerning taste from far and wide. It became known as Uncle Jack's Café, which bloomed into a palace of superb Indian food. Today his son, Raj, runs the establishment under a new banner, Victoria Café and Bakery. Back home from the funeral, Uncle Jack thought about two friends, Ganesh Moodley, 97 who lives somewhere south of Durban, and Ahmed Sheik Ansari, 98, of Johannesburg.



FAROOK KHAN

He said that, like them, he too could not complain too much. "God has given us a bonus. We have long life. Throughout our time, we have worked hard, cared for our families and we have done some good. But when I look around today, there are great difficulties. "The crime, violence and the battle to be able to get jobs now are restrictions on our young people from getting work," said Uncle Jack. He recalled the days of apartheid and organised crime. It was a battle for decent people to raise their families, make a good living, and help build a society based on morality.

Uncle Jack and his generation believed that they had overcome their difficulties, only to be confronted by even more trials and tribulations. He is worried about the future generations; he believes that it is going to be extremely difficult for them to have a good quality life. "All I can say is that they must be good people, continue to do good, and to be of service to all the creation in this world. We have been put on Earth for a purpose and that is to give service," said Uncle Jack. Then as an after-thought, he said, "Oh yes. The only thing I did bad was to hit back, when somebody tried to hit me."

THE BOTTOM LINE

The burden of being black

INITIALY, I was hesitant about writing an opinion piece on the killings of Anni Dewani and Reeva Steenkamp and the subsequent public outcry. A multitude of gifted writers had already tackled the story from seemingly every angle. However, I was inspired by a table discussion on these and other crimes in so far as they continue to ignite a passionate debate about race. In case you need to be reminded, the court case surrounding the Steenkamp shooting resumed this week and yesterday (Tuesday) Anni's husband Shrien Dewani, arrived in South Africa to face charges of murdering his wife. Two of Dewani's murderers have been convicted and are currently serving their sentences for their roles in the crime. Steenkamp was gunned down by her boyfriend, Oscar Pistorius. The circumstances surrounding her death were that Pistorius mistook

her for an "intruder" and acted to protect them both. Pistorius, understandably, did not see the "intruder". One cannot impute a racial profile to the "intruder". Pistorius fired a volley of shots through a door. More recently two men, both Africans, were indicted for their roles in the fatal shooting of a Pietermaritzburg doctor. The alleged arrangement was that men would carry out the killing in return for money. These deaths offer little comfort – and pose many questions. What makes some of these cases so appalling is the difficulty in finding evidence to dispute claims of self-defence, if indeed such claims were made. Point blank, the killers or, in some instances the targets, were racially profiled. The senseless killing of Anni illustrates the burden of African males. The burden is that of knowing that once you reach adulthood you



AMI NANAKCHAND

would either be labelled a threat and if you are poor you face the fate of falling into the "devil's temptation" (as was the case for Zola Tongo, "the fixer" in the murder of Anni Dewani) to commit serious and violent crimes in return for money. No matter how hard one tries, unless one has been in their shoes, one cannot fully understand the damage that these experiences can have on a person's psyche. Try as hard as one can to be colour blind, the racial sensitivities of some of these cases are heavy. The extent to which African lives are perceived to be cheap is illustrated in Tongo's alleged contract to murder. He was reportedly offered R1 000 to arrange Anni's murder. In another development a weekend newspaper carries a report – "R5 000 for a child's life". That's the amount offered by a plant hire business for each of four children killed when they were run over by one of its graders. The implication is obvious – African lives are cheap. Without the risk of playing the race card overtly these and the reactions to the draft legislation on job

reservation and fears of an ethnic cleansing that have contributed to Indo-South African anger has been sufficiently noticed. It is still too early to be sure what political form these stirrings will take but it is necessary to move with great speed to ensure that the community's sullenness against the government does not rub off on them. The ethical commitment that galvanised a post-1994 crusade against the evil of racism is being considerably blurred by the realisation that those who espoused the principle of non-racism also play foul. In the framework of moral absolutes, "we" are seen to be as imperfect and sinful as "them". In a bygone era public opinion didn't count. Today, as some of us discover to our cost, a spectacular track record of fighting injustice can be effortlessly nullified by a misadventure.

INSPIRATIONS

The no-name resting place

ANNA RAY JONES

MY father and I had been enemies since my feet first hit the floor. I was not the only one in the family that made him mad. When he and my mum would argue, they made the house a scary place. They would quarrel for hours over the stupidest things and even take their fights from room to room. When one of them walked away, the other would follow just to get the last word in. My brother and I would clear out of their way, trying to keep their yelling at a distance. Of the two of them, our mum was the nicer person. She was kind, easily gave hugs and always tried to make things right. It wasn't that hard to side with her against Dad.

The problem was the situation in our house became a war – three to one – year in, year out. Mum wouldn't or couldn't divorce him. My family never had much money, and there was nowhere else for us to go. She promised she would never leave without Brian and me. The situation didn't change until I was 16 and my brother 18. We had both dropped out of school and had jobs. This was when I destroyed my father's life, as much as if I had taken a gun and shot him.

He was much older than mum and had become weak and pathetic (but still could act up). I was so hell-bent on hating him and proving that I could defend my mother that I didn't pay any attention to a strange sadness that settled on him. I didn't care. I was busy plotting our escape. My brother and I had planned a savings account together, and after a year of work, we finally had enough money to move out. I found an apartment and told Mum we were all, at last, going to be free of Dad. She took some convincing but we finally got her to agree. No one told Dad we were leaving him. He stayed alone in the slummy, decrepit house we had all shared as a family. From that time on, he seemed to age very quickly into a fearful and lonely old man, grateful for any kind word or smile. My mother took pity on him and would have him over to Sunday lunch every week, but my brother and I just ignored him. I managed, by some miracle, to get a scholarship to go to college and was a few weeks away from leaving home when the police called to tell us that our father had been hit by a car. He had left a bar very drunk and had walked out into the traffic. Mum and I visited Dad in hospital, and for the first time since I was very little, I felt sad and guilty that he was badly hurt and in pain. He died alone a few days later. My mum and I planned a cheap funeral on what was left of his pension. We were the only people at the graveside in an area of the cemetery that was quite barren. Dad had few friends and Brian flatly refused to come, saying, "Close the lid and

walk away. He can't bother us anymore." But Dad did bother me. A few summers later, when I was visiting Mum and Brian, I decided to go to the cemetery alone to see if I could find his grave. I was curious I guess. I found no headstone and was shocked to discover from the caretaker, and her lists of the dead, that he had been buried in the "Potter's Field" side of the graveyard, where no-name people and criminals were laid. Mum had never told me we lacked the money to buy a burial plot. The field was a bare uneven slope. I remember it began to rain heavily. I ran all over that small hill trying to find some clue as to where my father might be buried. The more I searched, the more I scrambled about like an animal with an injury, until I collapsed sobbing in the middle of the wet field. I realised for the first time in my life I was finally grieving for my father. Not just for him, but for all the things that seemed lost to us. I had been so angry and so busy changing everything for Brian and me and my mum, that I'd left out the one person in my life who had needed help the most. Sitting there in the rain, I finally understood that some people simply don't know, and many never know, how to be their best selves, that often bad things happen to them and makes them the way they are, and if no one reaches out to help them get free, or if they're not strong enough to do it for themselves, there's simply no way for them to change. I stayed there in the field until it was dusk when the caretaker found me. I poured out my story to her and she took me back to her office to get through dusty files. From faded records and plot maps, she was able to pinpoint a narrow patch by a Rowan bush where my father lay in his no-name place. Then she asked me what I wanted to do. "I'll come by tomorrow," I said hesitantly, "with some flowers."

"No time like the present," she said firmly. She turned and raised a bunch of orange tiger lilies from the vase on her desk and handed them to me. It was dark when the two of us laid the lilies down in the mud by the Rowan tree. The caretaker explained that it was not allowed to place a headstone there. For that I would have to buy Dad a proper grave site and what would be the point of moving him after all this time. But I had an idea. I had once seen "Meadow in a Can" in a store, cans of wild flower seeds that can be scattered to grow as they would in nature, their colours and blooms shooting up every which way. I would be back to sow the whole barren field a lush riot of flowers ... an Eden for all pushed aside and misplaced people... and for my dad... at peace at last, I hope, knowing that his daughter finally honoured him in that no-name resting place. ■ *Compiled by Ray Maharaj*

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